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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 000023

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FROM AMBASSADOR AGUIRRE FOR AMBASSADOR NULAND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MARR](#) [SP](#)  
SUBJECT: SPAIN SCENESETTER FOR AMBASSADOR NULAND'S JANUARY  
16-17 VISIT

REF: A. 2007 MADRID 2297  
[1](#)B. 2007 MADRID 1910  
[1](#)C. USNATO 610

Classified By: Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: I warmly welcome your visit to Madrid in the company of your Spanish counterpart. I am pleased at the initiative taken by Ambassador Benavides, and I know that you will be well received by his colleagues and our contacts. When you arrive, Spain will be emerging from the Holidays and starting to focus on what is likely to be a very competitive March 9 general election. Although the media here prefers to focus on differences in the U.S.-Spain relationship resulting from Spain's 2004 withdrawal from Iraq, military-to-military cooperation is excellent, as is cooperation in areas of common interest such as fighting terrorism and organized crime and promoting the spread of democracy in many areas of the world. We think of Spain as a trusted (if some would say under-performing) Ally and a solid NATO partner, committed to strengthening the Transatlantic security relationship. We know Spain could do more in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and with fewer national caveats. We look forward to the opportunity your trip presents to reinforce the message that each Ally must step up to meet the challenges in Afghanistan. At the same time, we hope your visit will provide momentum to resolve the contested Spanish proposal to train an Afghan National Army company, an innovative offer already on the table. End summary.

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NOTIONAL SCHEDULE  
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[1](#)2. (C) We propose that you take time upon your arrival to sit down with me and members of the Mission's pol-mil team, before meeting with Spanish officials. We would like to update you on our bilateral efforts to reinforce NATO goals, and we need to hear from you, behind closed doors, what you think of Spain's cooperation and responsiveness thus far. Ambassador Benavides is working with my team and yours to arrange meetings with key interlocutors at the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs and Trade. At MOD, we recommend you meet with Secretary General for Policy Luis Cuesta, a friend of the United States and a transatlanticist. You should also see MFA Political Director Rafael Dezcallar, a career diplomat and former Fulbright Scholar who is also an important Embassy contact. Either Deputy Chief of Mission Hugo Llorens or I plan to accompany you to both of these meetings with our key partners. The Spanish would like to hold a lunch in your honor. You and Ambassador Benavides will address security scholars and journalists in a roundtable format (on background only) at the respected Royal Elcano Institute. Finally, we hope you will make time for a one-on-one press interview with a journalist who has strong defense analysis credentials.

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SECURITY AND DIPLOMATIC COOPERATION  
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13. (SBU) Spanish military cooperation matters. The bases of Rota and Moron are strategic hubs, midway between the U.S. and Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S. planes and ships account for around 5,000 flights and 250 port calls a year in Spain. The Spanish military is pro-U.S. and pro-NATO. The navy employs the AEGIS system in its frigates and has been working for five years to acquire the Tomahawk missile system. Spain is also interested in the Joint Strike Fighter. We need to keep this military-to-military relationship strong.

14. (SBU) Spain has just under 750 troops supporting ISAF in the Afghanistan theater of operations, to include a provincial reconstruction team in Badghis province. Over 30 additional Spanish personnel are set to deploy the week of January 14 as part of a 6-month rotation from NATO's Component Command-Land Headquarters in Madrid to staff the ISAF headquarters in Kabul. They have contributed some 150 million Euros in Afghan reconstruction funds. As you are well aware, negotiations are underway to allow the Spanish to train and equip an Afghan National Army company, which we hope will be a prelude to the training and equipping of a full battalion. On Iraq, Spain has contributed \$22 million to the Basrah Children's Hospital and a further \$28 million in development funding for Iraq. Spain has nearly 1,100 troops with UNIFIL in Lebanon, over 500 in Kosovo, and 260 in Bosnia. As of December 2007, a Spanish general commands Operation Althea or EUFOR, the EU Mission in Bosnia. Spain is also offering two transport aircraft and logistics support personnel to the EU Mission to Chad.

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15. (SBU) On the diplomatic front, Spain in recent years has more often been a follower than a leader, looking to stay within EU consensus on issues such as Kosovo, Iran, and missile defense. It is more forward-leaning on the Middle East peace process, undoubtedly driven by FM Moratinos' long personal involvement in the issue. Moratinos was an eager participant in the Annapolis Conference and helped ensure Spain made a robust pledge of support for the Palestinian Authority during the recent Paris donors' conference. Driven by the twin threats of terrorism and illegal immigration, Spain is also increasing its engagement with the countries of North and Western Africa.

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AFGHAN TRAINING OFFER VS. FORCE GENERATION REQUESTS  
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16. (C) I commend your efforts with Ambassador Benavides to find a workable solution to the Spanish offer to train an Afghan National Army company in Badghis province, providing much-needed security for its area of operations. Mr. Cuesta has told us Spain could accept the CSTC-A's compromise language (ref A). We appear to be closer now than ever before to being able to accept the Spanish proposal in terms that are politically justifiable to Spain. Your meeting at the MOD could be just the impetus needed to seal this deal before it is too late to make a difference in Badghis or before Spanish attentions are focused on domestic matters. CSTC-A Deputy Commander General George's participation in a February 13-14 seminar sponsored by the Spanish MOD on the work of PRTs in Afghanistan also presents opportunities to iron out details, but the political push must come now.

17. (C) In the lead up to the Bucharest Summit in April, our embassy will be developing and implementing creative strategies to generate additional ISAF contributions from Spain. My team judges the anticipated requests to Spain may be unrealistic. Nor do they address the outstanding GOS training offer. In any event, we deem it unlikely that Spain will do much more prior to the March 9 elections. With your

help, we can begin to plow the ground now. The Spanish are more likely to hear and respond to additional requests if they are assured we and CSTC-A value their commitments thus far.

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SPANISH ELECTIONS  
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18. (SBU) Spain will hold a general election March 9, and the campaign will just be heating up as you arrive. The ruling Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) candidate is President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. Despite a strong economy, a budget surplus, and a variety of social spending initiatives, the early polls indicate a close race. Nevertheless, the polls also suggest Partido Popular (PP) candidate Mariano Rajoy has had limited success getting his message out. The PSOE will run on the economy and its social programs. The PP will argue the economy is softening and that the PSOE has made too many concessions to Basque and Catalan regional governments, is weak on ETA, and soft on illegal immigration. Foreign affairs is unlikely to be a key issue, but the PSOE will remind voters it got Spain out of Iraq while the PP will say Spain's international prestige has slipped.

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CONCLUSION  
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19. (SBU) Again, I am looking forward to your visit. While we want to avoid being an issue in the Spanish elections, we do need to remind Spain that the bilateral relationship is founded on strong mutual interests such as counter-terrorism and law enforcement. Regardless of who wins in March, terrorists, drug traffickers, and alien smugglers will continue to see both our countries as targets and the people of Afghanistan will continue to need our help. We have much work to do together.

AGUIRRE